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THE HISTORICAL ELEMENT IN WESTERN AND EASTERN EPICS: DIGENIS — SAYYID-BATTAL — DAT-EL-HEMMA — ANTAR — "CHANSON DE ROLAND"

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THE HISTORICAL ELEMENT IN WESTERN AND  
EASTERN EPICS

DIGENIS — SAYYID-BATTAL — DAT-EL-HEMMA <sup>1</sup> —  
ANTAR — *CHANSON DE ROLAND*

By HENRI GRÉGOIRE

It is only natural to try to apply the few concrete results of our research in the field of Byzantine and Arabo-Turkish epic to another epic question, about which the opinions of the greatest and seemingly best equipped scholars still widely differ, I mean the famous *Chanson de Roland*.

The use of the comparative method seems fully legitimate because of the strikingly similar conditions in which that epic arose and grew.

Its starting point beautifully coincides chronologically with the period in which both the Byzantine hero and his counterpart, the Moslem martyr, fought and fell: Sayyid-Battal, the historical Sayyid-Battal in 740, Digenis in 788.

Likewise, the end of the evolution of the Moslem epic material can be dated about 1100. Both in the Turkish story and in the Arab romance of chivalry, the last historical characters which we can identify are persons who appeared on the stage of history during the last years of the eleventh century and at the beginning of the twelfth.

The Byzantine Emperors who are named in connection with the Moslem fighters all belong to that period, and to that period only. And not only their names, but also their deeds correspond with the actual role of the historical rulers who bear their names.

For instance, during the fourth and fifth part of the Arab Romance, the Byzantine Emperors are named Michael, Armanous, Alfalougos, a second Michael, Milas. In the Turkish Sayyid-Battal, we find other names: Takfour and Kanatous and also Asator.

<sup>1</sup> We shall also use the shorter form of that title, viz. Del-Hemma.

Most of these names are perfectly clear, and one can hardly say even that they are distorted: Armanous, for example, the most warlike of these Byzantine Emperors who, after a long series of victories and defeats, twice loses his throne and twice recovers it, to be finally strangled by Alfalougos, is evidently Emperor Romanos Diogenes who, like Armanous, is once taken prisoner by the Moslems. Michael reminds us of Michael Doukas. As to Falougos, his identity with Palæologos had been recognized by Professor Canard. But the French scholar had been puzzled by the name of the great Byzantine dynasty of the XIIIth and XIVth centuries.

Now it suffices to open at random the Byzantine historians of the end of the eleventh century to discover that our Falougos-Palæologos is simply the brother-in-law of Alexios Comnenos, who fought against the Turks in Asia Minor, like his father, who helped Alexios conquer Constantinople and was so active against Robert Guiscard in 1081.

It is not astonishing that, in a confused period so full of usurpers, — Nikephoros Botaniates, Nikephoros Bryennios, Nikephoros Melissenos, some of whom may or may not be looked upon as regular Emperors, — the Arabs should have given the imperial title to powerful generals closely related to the legitimate Emperor, or confused them with the reigning Basileus.

Alfalougos is possibly confused with actual Emperors. When he is spoken of as the son of the Emperor and of the daughter of the King of Georgia, one is reminded of the fact that his brother-in-law, Alexios Comnenos, had been made the adoptive son of Empress Maria, who actually was a Georgian Princess; and when he orders poor Armanous to be strangled, he seems to be confused with Emperor Michael Doukas.

Again, the Del-Hemma speaks of a Moslem called Ghilan "qui passe avec toute sa troupe au camp de l'Empereur où il acquiert une haute situation. Ghilan devient le véritable chef de l'armée byzantine."

This applies to the famous traitor so often mentioned under different names in the Oriental and Byzantine sources. The Byzantines (Bryennios) call him "Chrysoskoulos" or "Chrysokoulos" (and possibly -Koulos Ghilan).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> For the Byzantine sources, see the article on the battle of Manzikert by Sauvaget

All this refers us to the same period. Another characteristic name is Bahilak, evidently Basilakis, the famous usurper and adversary of Alexios Comnenos; cf. in the Del-Hemma: "L'Empereur ayant été blessé dans un combat singulier contre Bahilak."<sup>3</sup> Here again, there may be a confusion, for another Basilakis played a doubtful role at Mantzikert.

A still more convincing identification is that of Asator, mentioned by the Sayyid-Battal Romance as being a Byzantine Emperor; we have shown that he was not, but only the most faithful supporter of Romanos Diogenes, the Armenian Khatchatour, commander of the Byzantine troops in Cilicia. This identification has been universally accepted.

As to Takfour, it is simply the Armenian word for Emperor, but it spread everywhere and was accepted by the Turks as an Armenian title or name because of the great many Emperors or would-be Emperors then called Nikephoros.

Finally, *Milas*, the name of the very last Byzantine Emperor in the Del-Hemma, is *Melissenos*, Nikephoros Melissenos, generally overlooked as a Byzantine Emperor, but who had been proclaimed as such by his troops, recognized as such by part of the Turks, and even acknowledged by Alexios Comnenos.

In the Sayyid-Battal, it is not Milas but Kanatous who appears as the last Byzantine Emperor. If his name were not transparent by itself, his deeds would compel us to recognize him. Kanatous succeeds in seizing the throne, thanks to the help of the Turks, to whom he does not remain faithful, for he attacks them with the help of the Frank Serdjail and the Frank Oudj, unmistakably the Crusaders Raymond de Saint Gilles and Hugues de Vermandois, both very famous from 1096 to 1100. The result is that Kanatous, who is bold enough to seize again the offensive against

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in *Byzantion*. I am quoting from C. Cahen's article, "La bataille de Mantzikert d'après les sources orientales," *Byzantion*, IX (1934), 613-642. Mr. Cahen writes about the Turkish refugee (pp. 625-626): "Un chef de la tribu turcomane des Naukya, le beau-frère du sultan Arisiaghi, ou Arisigi. . . ." These two forms of the name are read in different Mss. of the Arab historian Sibṭ. "Matthieu d'Edesse appelle le personnage Guédrij, forme qui peut résulter de l'interversion de deux mots composants." Cahen thinks of *Χρυσόσκουλος*, the form used by Bryennios.

<sup>3</sup> For the Del-Hemma, I refer to M. Canard, "Le Delhemma," *Byzantion*, X (1935). My article on Khatchatour, bearing the title "Héros épiques inconnus," appeared in the *Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales* II (1934), 451-463.

the Moslems, must be the "restitutur Imperii," *Alexios Comnenos*.

Comnenos is a difficult name subject to many distortions, and, as a matter of fact, almost always distorted, even in Occidental sources (Coninos). But Kanatous at least beautifully and regularly preserves the Greek accent. In modern Turkish, every oxytone Greek word still ends in -ous. Cf. *καρπός*, karpuz. . . . And as to the change of the last -n to -t, one must not forget that one more dot on the same Arab letter automatically brings it about. So far as Saint-Gilles is concerned, we find him also in the Del-Hemma, under Falougos: "l'on voit intervenir notamment un Roi Franc nommé Shamkhoulis" (cf. Sangelis of the Byzantines).

If all this onomastic material is not sufficient, we shall point to a character called *Bimont*, who once ousts Emperor Armanous. But this Bimont treats the Moslems with such ferocity that the best Arab fighters unite their forces against him. Bimont is naturally Bohemond, so famous in the whole East since his father's war in Epirus in the year 1081.

Most of our identifications are borne out by a partly parallel text which has never been adduced until the present day; it is simply the once too famous *Antar Romance* which, a century ago, was universally looked upon as the greatest and grandest of epics *überhaupt*.

The star of our romantic poetry, Lamartine, admired it more than Homer and, in spite of the tremendous dimensions of that "magnum opus," many attempts were made in different countries to translate it completely, but all these attempts failed. Even the English translation, which is the longest, contains hardly one third of the whole.

It is one of the scandals of Oriental philology that the *Antar Romance*, "mehr gelobt als gelesen," remains a kind of virgin soil. Even the best Italian arabist, Nallino, is astonishingly non-committal about the fundamental questions: "L'unica notizia sicura è che, già alla metà del secolo XII di Cristo, il Romanzo godeva di grande popolarità nell'Oriente arabo (Siria e Mesopotamia), popolarità che, almeno in Egitto ed in Siria, si mantenne fino a tutto il secolo XIX. Manca finora uno studio critico dell'opera; la più ampia delle parziali traduzioni Europee e quella di T. Hamilton."

Nevertheless, I think that even a perfunctory perusal, I shall not say of the published "résumés" of the book, but of the only

reliable study of it, that of Bernhard Heller, will enable us to fix, just as in the case of the *Dat-el-Hemma* and *Sayyid-Battal*, the date of the latest historical allusions or interpolations.

Antar himself is naturally the pre-islamic poet, but the Romance as we have it clearly represents the conclusion of an evolution of his legend and its spirit is the spirit of the Crusades. But it does not breathe Turkish ferocity like the *Sayyid* or *Dat-el-Hemma*. Its atmosphere is more chivalrous. It was conceived and written in Syria or Palestine under the Crusaders and aims at a kind of reconciliation of the two races. In that respect, it is nearer to *Digenis* than to its two other Moslem counterparts. I am speaking naturally of the last edition, not of the *Ur-Antar* (says Heller: "Die Umriss des Ur-Antars lassen sich mit philologischer Wahrscheinlichkeit entwerfen nach dem Schwanengesang in welchem Antar auf sein Leben zurückblickt").

The adventures which are not included in that swan-song belong to the last period; and among them we see the diverse amorous exploits of the Arab hero twice begetting our own Godefroid de Bouillon, for the latter knight appears under two forms: *Ghandafar* and *Kontofre* (the Greek transcription).

This *procédé* is exactly that which the author of *Digenis* uses in order to link together his hero and the Moslem heroes, namely 'Amr.

Mr. Heller seems to believe that the time-limit is late in the twelfth century. But I think that nothing can be found in the *Antar Romance*, which could not belong to the end of the eleventh nor the beginning of the XIIth century.

What is *Antar's* last exploit? He kills . . . Bohemond, and rescues Rome besieged by the latter. He does that as an ally of the Byzantine Emperor, as an ally of the King of Rome called *Balkâm*. One remembers that the killing of Bohemond, the greatest enemy of both the Byzantines and the Moslems, was mentioned also in the *Del-Hemma*, where it is said to be the merit of *Del-Hemma* herself. It is an epic law that the supreme victory over the national enemy "number" one must be kept in store for the greatest hero of the "geste." In the German epic, it is always the insuperable Dietrich von Berne or Theodoric of Verona who survives all other champions.

Antar, the Arab knight par excellence, saves Byzantium and

Rome and kills the great Norman Bohemond. This is certainly a direct echo of the alliance of the Byzantine Empire with Moslem states and princes in their fight against the Normans. And if we had the slightest doubt about that, that doubt would be suppressed by the very names of the relatives of Bohemond: Mubert, Subert, Kubert. History is so vaguely known to philologists that even Heller has not seen the truth: "hier haben wir es mit einer Gruppe von Namen auf *-bert* zu tun. Tatsächlich ist dies vielleicht die häufigste Endung der altfranzösischen Namen (Aubert, Dagobert, Engelbert . . .)" and he cites a dozen of other similar names, forgetting that Bohemond's father was Robert (Guiscard).

Antar's expedition as an ally of Byzantium is simply Alexios Comnenos' and Palæologos' war against Robert and Bohemond: and this at once clears up the name of the King of Rome, or of the Romans, Balkâm, who is Palæologos himself, but under the French form of Baligan.

The Antar Romance thus affords us an unexpected confirmation of our identification of Paleologos with Baligan in the *Chanson de Roland*. In the Syria of the Crusaders, evidently, the famous war of 1081-1085, celebrated by the French *trouvères*, inspired the Arab novelist, and we may conclude that the Antar Romance was completed exactly at the same period as the other epics aforementioned.

We shall now return to the *Chanson de Roland* itself and try to use the conclusions reached by us to solve some of the problems of the French Iliad.

I repeat that the use of the comparative method seems a priori justified because of the strikingly similar conditions in which that epic arose and grew. Digenis, the historical Digenis, fell in a fight against the Arabs of Asia Minor in the year 788; Roland, in 778. We may add that Sayyid-Battal's death is only 40 years older.

Both the Byzantine and Moslem gestes, but especially the Moslem, were revived in Seldjouk times and came to an end after the serious set-back inflicted upon the Seldjouks by the Crusaders. They were not revived, however, by the glorious age of Saladin, nor by the rise of the Ottomans. In other words, the Moslem epic was fixed some time after 1100.

If this be so, and we have proved that it cannot be gainsaid,

we shall be struck by the similarity in the development of the French geste. So far as the *Chanson de Roland* is concerned, the two schools which advocate either a date before 1100 or a date after 1100 agree fundamentally about the chronological question. Nobody has ever thought of dating the present chanson much later than 1100, or much earlier than 1085. Roughly speaking, we may and must state that operating in two widely separated fields and using altogether different methods, two groups of scholars have been led, or rather compelled to ascribe almost the same chronological starting point and almost the same terminus to their particular *matière épique*.

Now, while we know all about the successive forms, editions, *remaniements* of the Greek poem of Digenis, and as we clearly see how the last edition of the Moslem Romance came about (the main difference between both is that the Greek epic was certainly crystallized about the year 1000, while the Moslem Romance, mainly composed of seventh, eighth, ninth century stuff, was remodeled under the influence of events of the late XIth), there are many conflicting theories about the making of the *Chanson de Roland*; and perhaps the experience or skill gained through our study of the oriental epics will enable us to choose between those conflicting doctrines and systems and provide us with some clues hitherto unknown to our learned colleagues the Romanists.

One thinks perhaps of the question of the *Cantilènes*. But I shall not now enter into that question, although I believe that it is very simple, and that we cannot account for the rise of any epic without assuming that primitive form of *Chansons de Geste*, so well borne out in the Byzantine field.

I shall limit myself to another problem; our *Chanson de Roland*, according to Bédier, is "un poème d'un seul jet," written for the first time and created almost "ex nihilo" by a French poet, shortly after 1100, under the fresh and powerful influence of the crusading spirit. Bédier denies that there was ever any other *Chanson de Roland* in existence before that date. He particularly hates, ridicules and rejects the very conception of a *Chanson* of, let us say, about 1010 or so. He rejects as legendary the clear-cut statement according to which the *Chanson* was sung at Hastings in 1066 by Taillefer.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The testimony of Wace, writing about 1160 in his *Geste des Normands* is borne



Almost all those who, in recent years, have approached the problem from the historical side, and above all Ferdinand Lot and Fawtier, came to the conclusion that Bédier was entirely wrong, and that there are many particulars in the *Chanson* which point to historical facts and surroundings of the end of the Xth and the beginning of the XIth century: for instance, the mention of *Laon*. Laon was the capital of the Carolingians in the Xth century, from the reign of Charles the Simple on. See *laisse* 207, which begins

Amis Rolanz, jo m'en irai en France:  
Com jo sorai a Loon en ma chambre. . . .

According to Fawtier and Lot, this is redolent of the first quarter of the XIth century, whereas the following *laisse*, which mentions *Aix*, seems to revert to the historical truth, and, moreover, by its curious enumeration of the conquests of Robert Guiscard,

Romain, Poillain, e tuit cil de Palerne,  
E cil d'Afrique e cil de Califerne,

proves that it was written at the end of the XIth century.

Of course we know the too easy rejoinder of stubborn unitarians (in the philological sense of the word), who would make us believe that the *laisses* similaires are "un procédé littéraire et rien de plus." But everything has been said "pro and contra" on that subject. My aim and my duty are only to lay before you new and, I hope, conclusive and decisive evidence proving that our French *Chanson* in its final form cannot even be conceived unless one bears in mind historical events of the sixties, seventies, and

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out by or goes back to William of Malmesbury (1120-1127) who speaks of a "cantilena Rolandi" at Roncevaux (cf. Jenkins p. 43 and p. 9). Here is the text of William: "Tunc cantilena Rollandi inchoata ut Martium viri exemplum pugnatueros accenderet inclamatoque Dei auxilio proelium consertum." This testimony, which cannot really be disposed of in good faith, suffices to annihilate Bédier's theory or theories, for either "cantilena" refers to some earlier edition of our poem, as we believe, or else it designates some kind of ballad. Now both assumptions, and especially the latter, are "ein Greuel" to Bédier! Cf. my articles on the *Chanson* de Roland: "La Chanson de Roland et Byzance, ou de l'utilité du Grec pour les Romanistes," *Byzantion*, XIV (1939), 265-315. (With the collaboration of M. R. de Keyser); cf. *ibid.*, pp. 689-691; "La Chanson de l'an 1085 ou l'étymologie de Baligant et de Califerne," *Bulletin de la Classe des Lettres de l'Académie Royale de Belgique*, XXV (1939), 211 ff.; "The actual date and the true historical background of the Chanson de Roland," *Belgium*, April 2, 1942, pp. 59-64, "Les dieux Cahu, Baraton, Tervagant etc.," *Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves* (1939-1944), p. 451 ff.

eighties of the eleventh century, and second, that this *Chanson* itself is a new edition of an older one, based on folk-songs or, at any rate, older stuff, but certainly later in its full conception than the year 1002 and prior to the battle of Hastings.

The first point, I think, is sufficiently demonstrated in my four publications on the *Chanson de Roland*, the first article in *Byzantion*, the lengthy *Mémoire* in the *Bulletin de l'Académie*, the short but, I hope, useful summary with some new texts and facts, which recently appeared in our periodical *Belgium* and the paper on Tervagant and other "Moslem Gods" which has lately appeared in our *Annuaire*.

My theory may be summarized in a few lines. The Baligan<sup>5</sup> episode is conspicuous for what the Germans would call a "Völkertafel," a catalogue of thirty pagan nations or places from which new Moslem enemies are supposed to come in order to rescue Marsile of Saragossa and to repulse Charlemagne after he had already avenged Roland, and cut the Arabs of Spain proper to pieces. This *Völkertafel* has never been properly studied and still less understood; everyone had failed to recognize that it was largely consistent, that it constituted a coherent whole, with no fanciful names at all. Never has the anti-historical bias of a Bédier shown itself so poor and so barren. Never has, on the contrary, the sound historical sense of a Gaston Paris appeared more justified and more prophetic. But both, and the whole crowd of international romanists, have always lacked the necessary knowledge of Eastern, or rather of Byzantine history, to solve a very simple problem. The host of Baligan is composed of thrice ten battalions or *escheles* and that which heads the first group is composed of "cels de Butentrot." The Butentrot problem and its discussion will remain as one of the disgraces upon Romance studies, and will prove forever that nothing can be achieved in the field of *Literaturgeschichte* without historical training.

The lamentable wavering between the two Butentrots, that of Epirus and that of Cilicia, to which American scholarship has contributed a great deal, was quite useless. If Butentrot dominates, as it does, a whole warlike episode, it must be because some great event took place there. The discovery of the battle of Butentrot, overlooked by all historians, although twenty lines of

<sup>5</sup> Or, *Baligant*.

the Latin epic of William of Apulia were dedicated to it, has shown that the name was not chosen at random by the trouvère. The battle of Butentrot, opposite Corfu, in 1081 was the first clash on the Greek mainland between a sea-borne invasion army coming from Italy and the defenders of the Greek soil. It was the first hostile conflict in the Balkan peninsula between West and East since very olden times, since the last days of the Roman Republic. And that momentous event was apt to strike the imagination of its contemporaries for many reasons; first, the ignorant and ambitious Normans of Robert Guiscard were under the impression that they were beginning the most daring and the most fruitful conquest, that of the older and richer part of the world, full of wealth, of luxury, of treasures, of marvels; second, they had been led to believe that their war was a holy war, the First Crusade. They were fighting under the standard of Saint Peter against a mixed army composed of almost countless national elements, most of them barbarous and pagan, which circumstances lent color to the pretense of Robert that he was a Crusader. The vanguard of the Byzantine army, which was repulsed near Butentrot, was composed of 2000 Turks!

Of course, for the past 10 or 15 years Norman chieftains and Norman rank-and-file had been fighting the Turks or with the Turks in Asia Minor, with the Byzantine armies or as rebellious units against them; it will suffice to name the names of Robert Crispin and of Roussel or Oursel de Bailleul and to recall the ephemeral States founded by them in Cappadocia and Pontus.

But it was the first time that the big Italo-Norman army came in touch with those dreaded fighters, and it must be acknowledged that their use, as well as that of the savage Patzinaks as auxiliary troops by the Byzantines, seemed to justify Western prejudice against that so-called Roman Empire of the East, which was notoriously schismatic since the fatal year 1054, and which did not refrain from seeking the support of the worst enemies of our faith.

The very name of Butentrot thus evoked the warlike opening of a great historical drama, that of the Crusades. But, viewed from the Norman side, with Norman bias, it appeared as a contest for the conquest of the Byzantine Empire, a program which materialized in 1203, after four Norman attempts, by Guiscard in 1081-1085, by Bohemond in 1106, that by Roger II in 1147, that of William II in 1185.

Butentrot is a poetical prelude to three or four great wars. That name, as we say in French, "est tout un programme" and its significance is made unmistakable by the overwhelming majority of the 29 other names, some of which, like Jericho, Canineis, Glos (Glossa), Bali, are in Epirus, or are Epirus itself (terre de Bire). And the rest are the Greek or foreign regiments of any Byzantine army of the end of the XIth century, named in every Charter or Chrysobull of those times and in many passages of the historians.

From the Patzinaks to the Serbs, from the Turks to the Persians, from the Armenians to the Valachians, or Bulgarians (the people of Samuel), not to speak of the old native regiment of the Opsicians (Occian) or of the curious Argoiles (Argolici).

Most of those names had been recognized and identified at least by somebody. Many people had rightly guessed what Butentrot was. Tavernier had understood "terre de Bire." Even in the notes of Jenkins, you will find somewhere, half hidden and naturally rejected with contempt, the idea that Jericho was in Epirus too. Even the most difficult names had been deciphered, including Occian, Opsicianus (Jenkins, p. 225), including Argoilles, for Jenkins says, p. 229: "Argoilles: Not identified. The occurrence of the name at v. 3474 in company with *Occiant* (see v. 3246) and *Bascle* (see v. 3474) may indicate that Argoille is at no great distance from these. The word seems to represent *Argolica*." But here, naturally, Jenkins loses the track: "besides Argolis in Greece, there were cities of Argos in Asia Minor, in Cilicia Minor and in Lycaonia. . . ." The explanation is quite different. If the Baligant episode lists a troop of Argoilles, it is because, after all, there were some . . . Greeks in the Greek army and the Greeks are called Argolici by William of Apulia.<sup>6</sup>

William of Apulia's poem, written about 1099, ends with the death of Robert Guiscard and was extant at le Bec and Mont

<sup>6</sup> Argoilles are mentioned three times in the *Chanson*, always in the Baligant episode: 3259, 3474, 3527. This is decisive, because it once more stresses the close connection between our *Chanson* with the Baligant episode and the *Gesta Roberti* written by William of Apulia at the end of the eleventh century. The unique manuscript of this Latin epic is to be found at Avranches and comes from the Abbaye of Mont Saint Michel, while another manuscript, now lost, belonged to the Abbaye of Le Bec. This will strike all students of Roland: the names of Saint Michel and Le Bec are constantly quoted in books dealing with the *Chanson*, the origin of which is so clearly Norman. An *Argolicus exercitus* is mentioned by Liudprand of Cremana, *Scriptores rerum germ. in usum Schol.*, ed. Becker (1915), p. 191.

Saint Michel. Now we know that *Tuoldus*, last redactor of the Roland (see v. 4002) was either Tuoldus de Burgo, son or nephew of Bishop Odon of Bayeux, half-brother of the conqueror, and later Abbot of Peterborough (dead 1098), or Tuoldus of Envermeu, who became Bishop of Bayeux after Odo (who died at Palermo in 1097) and afterwards a monk in the Monastery of Le Bec (1093-1124).

The exact date of his death is unknown. We shall not today try to liquidate the Tuoldus question. But it is sufficiently clear that the author of the Baligant-Roland was a Norman, chiefly interested in the Balkan wars of Robert and Bohemond, and it is equally evident that he could not have been so completely absorbed by this Greek incident, if he had written after the first Crusade proper. The use by him of a learned source like William's poem is decisively proved by the word *Argoilles*. Only a learned poet could use such an artificial expression.<sup>7</sup>

Our thesis, I think, will be generally accepted: Roland, with Baligant, belongs to the end of the XIth century. But we must prove our second thesis, which is that of Fawtier and Lot: the author of the Roland-Baligant added the Balkanic episode to an older poem, shorter, the conclusion of which was the defeat of Marsile and Ganelon's punishment, coming immediately after the victory recounted in *laisse* 179.

This thesis is almost self-evident. If one accepts both my date for our *Chanson* and the fact that it was sung at Hastings, it is clear that Baligant is a late embellishment; and I need not recall that this appears evident, too, for a great many philological reasons. But it is proved or confirmed in the most impressive way by the existence of that Latin poem, the *Carmen de Proditione Guenonis*, which is obviously a latinization (quite similar to the *Waltharius*) of the older *Chanson*.

Now, in the *Carmen* there is no Baligan-episode at all. We may safely revert to the commonsense-solution of the problem, which is really not a problem: we are happy enough to possess in the *Carmen* at least a résumé of the Roland which we have postulated

<sup>7</sup> It is true that William's poem seems to know the capture of Jerusalem. But this is a quite isolated mention, probably interpolated. The poem, like the *Chanson*, is uninfluenced by the great events which, naturally, no comparison being possible between the capture of Jericho in Epirus and the siege of Jerusalem, plunged the former story into oblivion.

and which everything compels us to assume: a Roland prior to Hastings and which we may date from 1025 to 1040.

An even more important date now requires determination: the *terminus post quem* the older Roland himself must have been written.

It is clear that the older poem was already characterized by the name of Marsile given to the adversary of Charlemagne, to the Moslem Charlemagne. Of course, Marsile is not a relic of the oldest period of the epic: there is no Marsile in the history of Moslem Spain, in the 8th or 9th century.

Other *Chansons de Geste*, like those of the Guillaume d'Orange cycle, more faithful to history, speak of Deramé, which is naturally Abd-er-Rahman. Why then Marsile? It must point to a more recent period of strife between Islam and Christendom. It is the familiar anachronism, by which, from time to time the epic is rejuvenated.<sup>8</sup>

Let us recall the constant appearance of later heroes in the Byzantine and Moslem epics; like Laon, it may point to the history of the Xth century, and once we accept that possibility, the riddle is solved, for there is only one really famous, universally known name of a Moslem ruler of Spain, after Abd-er-Rahman. It is Al-Mansour, who, one must not forget it, wrested Catalonia from the Franks. Al-Mansour, which means "the victorious," was not of royal origin. His real name was Ibn Abi Amir.

In spite of his heroic achievements, in spite of the fact that he had reconquered a large part of Christian Spain and seemed about to liquidate the last independent States in the Peninsula, it was morally impossible for him to become a calif. Of course, he never ceased to aim at that supreme consecration of his merits and fame and, in February or March 997, it looked as though he had attained his goal, for the calif Hisham II resigned. But his resignation could not be accepted and Al-Mansour was soon compelled to

<sup>8</sup> Another name for a Moslem chieftain is the famous Thibaud, the adversary of Guillaume d'Orange. We shall prove that this name did not deserve to be ridiculed by Bédier. For Tedbalt l'Esturman = Thibaut d'Arabie, or l'Escler, or l'Esclavon (see *La Chançon de Willame*, ed. E. S. Tyler, New York; Oxford University Press, 1919, p. 172) is really the king of the Teutons, Teutobodus, *alias* Teutobochus, who was supposed to have been vanquished and slain at Orange. Guillaume de Toulouse became Guillaume d'Orange because he was credited with Marius' victories. This is a beautiful example of the role played by Roman monuments, connected with classical and local traditions, in the rise of mediaeval epics.

allow Hisham to appear in public "coiffé du haut bonnet que les califes seuls avaient le droit de porter."<sup>9</sup>

Marsile is the very name of Mansour, scarcely altered.

It is well known that *r* and *l*, especially as pronounced in Arabic, are often confused in the Western languages and the same remark applies to *i* and *u*. To limit ourselves to the *Chanson de Roland*, we shall quote only a very characteristic parallel. In verse 3131 and again 3191, we find a Syrian messenger called both times "uns Sulians" (viz: Syrianus). Here too, we have the equation *u* = *i* in an Oriental name.

But the best proof perhaps that Marsile is Mansour, the most dreaded enemy of the Christians who ever ruled in Spain, is afforded by the curious passages of the epic where he appears along with another character called Al-Galife, the Calif.

These passages have always been so many puzzles to all commentators, because "Al-Galife" is nowhere properly introduced, but taken for granted, so to speak, and considered to be a kind of President of Marsile's counsel. His first speech is rather contemptuous for Marsile (*laisse* 35). After a warrantable fit of anger, furious at a defiant speech of Ganelon "the best of the Sarrasins prevailed upon Marsile to sit down again on his throne."

Dist l'algalifes: "Mal nos avez baillit  
Que lo Franceis asmastes a ferir:  
Lui doüssiez escolter ed odir."

"You did us a bad turn in making to strike the Frenchman. You should have listened to him, attended to his words."<sup>10</sup>

And it is to the Calif, who acts as a kind of wise umpire, desirous of mending Ganelon's "gaffes," that the Frenchman replies, not to Marsile. There are still six passages where we find Algalife. Verse 505 in Marsile's Council held in that famous orchard, we find:

. Ses meillors homes meinet ensemble od sei,  
E Blancandrins i vint a l chanut peil,  
E Jurfalés ki est sis filz ed heirs,  
E l'algalifes, sis oncles e fedeilz.

<sup>9</sup> About Al-Mansour, see naturally R. Dozy, *Histoire des Musulmans d'Espagne*, new edition by Levy-Provençal, II (1932), 200 ff. Page 222, Ibn Abi Amir becomes Hadjib or chamberlain. Page 251, "il était donc Roi et n'était pas encore Calife." Page 255, resignation of the Calif. Page 256, the Calif is made to appear in public. Page 263, death of Al-Mansour and Christian legend about it. His end, according to that legend (he is defeated by the Christians and goes to hell), closely resembles Marsile's end in the *Chanson*.

<sup>10</sup> Mrs. Sherwood's translation.

Shortly before, v. 493, Marsile declares that Charlemagne wants to receive his uncle the Algalife as a hostage (which does not seem to be Charlemagne's genuine claim, at least it had never been mentioned before by any Moslem or Christian character of the *Chanson*). — But, v. 681, Ganelon, in his false report to Charlemagne, seems to assume that the claim had been made and accepted, for he invents an excuse for the fact that he does not bring the Algalife among the hostages. He reports that he was drowned before his eyes in a tempest which caused his ship to be sunk.

Algalife reappears, v. 1914, where he remains to confront the French at Roncevaux after Marsile's flight <sup>11</sup> and the same Algalife, vers 1943, mortally wounds Oliver in the back, to be slain by Oliver shortly before the latter's death.

The role of the Calif has prompted many doubts and his relationship to Marsile has been spoken of as puzzling and obscure. But, if we accept that Marsile is Al-Mansour, then everything becomes clear; it was a touch of local color, for a poet acquainted with Spanish Moslem affairs at the beginning of the XIth century, to assume the coexistence and, as it were, the joint rule of two sovereigns, the King and the Calif.

Of course, this was not, or no longer understood at the end of the eleventh century and from that time evidently dates a passage like 1913 ff., where the Calif is represented as a foreign ruler. (In Spain the title was discontinued after 1060):

Remés i est sis oncles l'algalifes,  
Ki tint Kartágene, Alferne e Garmalie,  
Ed Ethiope une tere maldite:  
La neire gent en at en sa baillie.

For many reasons, these verses are to be connected with the counter-offensive of the African Moslems under Yusuf in the eighties of the XIth century.

But Algalife, certainly, belongs, along with Marsile, to the older *Chanson*.

I shall not enlarge in this paper upon many details which bear out our thesis. Let me say only that an important episode which, like that of Baligant, is absent from the *Carmen de Proditione Guenonis*, appears to be like it an interpolation of the end of the XIth century. It is the *Blancandrin* episode. Blancandrin de

<sup>11</sup> From now on, the Oxford manuscript, probably thinking that Algalife is drowned, speaks of Marganice.



Valfunde is the wisest adviser of the Moslem King. He proposes to send an Embassy to Charlemagne to appease him and to promise on behalf of King Marsile to turn Christian.

He himself heads the delegation, addresses Charlemagne, promising hostages and everything. One knows that that embassy seems to constitute a "double emploi" with Charlemagne's own embassy, headed by Ganelon, which is essential to the story. Blancandrin's role has always seemed suspicious. It must have been added at a late period for some peculiar reason. It is curious that he is utterly forgotten in the different battles and never again mentioned. For that reason, we are convinced, like Fawtier, that here is again a name famous about 1080-1085, which crept in into the *Chanson*. Now, from 1075 to 1092, the most famous character of Moslem Spain was certainly Ben Yahya-Alkadir, first King of Toledo from 1075 to 1085, and after that date, by the favor of Alfonso the VIth to whom he had bowed (just as Blancandrin proposes to bow to Charles), King of Valencia. It is striking that Blancandrin (Ben-Alkadir), is said to be of Valfunde (it is well known that many historical names are fancifully altered in their final part to fit the assonance, and it even happens that, because of different assonances, they appear in 2 laisses in 2 different forms). The Alkadir of history was a very influential but also unreliable figure, oscillating between Christians and Moslems with great skill and, probably with full right, suspect to both camps.

But he seems to have been extremely dignified, "wise," that is to say, smart, learned and scholarly. The author of what we may call the Blancandrin episode, while he presents him as a wily and treacherous envoy and uses him to seduce Ganelon, seems to admire his wisdom after all in the service of his own cause, and the whole character is drawn according to this sketch at the beginning of *laisse* 3:

Blancandrins fut des plus sávies paiens,  
De vasselage fut asez chevaliers:  
Prodome i out por son seignor aidier. . . <sup>12</sup>

We may add another Moslem name: Jurfaleu or Jurfalé or Jurfaré (again the alternation L,R). Verse 504, Jurfalé is men-

<sup>12</sup> About the career of Alkadir-Blancandrin, consult Dozy, edition Levy Provençal, III, 118, 120-122, 132, 227-228, 239 and 240.

tioned as the son and heir of Marsile, and it is remarkable that one of the last Moslem kings of Valencia, before the conquest of that town by the Cid was King Jafar, 1092-1095.

I also find in Menéndez's book, p. 307, the Palace of Aljaferia in Saragossa, from Abu-Djafar, end of the XIth century.<sup>13</sup>

These examples will suffice. Those who maintain that there is no history at all in medieval epics, that the names of the principal characters are either fanciful or, if historic, prove nothing, should acknowledge that he who does not find anything historical in the *Chanson de Geste* is generally a pure philologist who knows history only from current text books. Menéndez Pidal has shown that the closer study of history is always, not likely, but sure to clear up more puzzles in the medieval poems. Of course, Al-Mansour has almost nothing in common with the traditional adversary of Charlemagne, but a poem where that adversary is called after Al-Mansour, who died in the year 1002, and who was immediately represented by Christian epic legend as having been slain in a disastrous battle must belong to the first half of the eleventh century, while the Balkanic and Guiscardian background of the Baligant episode, and many a trait of Spanish history, like Balaguer besieged about 1080,<sup>14</sup> or the role of Blancandrin-Alkadir, point to those years of epic struggles in Catalonia and in Epirus, when the crusading spirit which led to the true Crusades stimulated the trouveres and jongleurs and invited them to rejuvenate the old and familiar songs by fresh memories and timely names of strange places and strange men.

To wind up, may I praise once more the insight of Gaston Paris, who said, speaking of the names in the *Chanson de Roland*, so unjustly belittled by Joseph Bédier: "je crois que ces noms se rattachent tous à quelque souvenir et à quelque tradition." But perhaps I should praise not only Gaston Paris, but also the creative genius of those fighting and singing Normans to whom we owe two French epopees:

"Celle qu'ils ont jadis écrite avec le glaive"

<sup>13</sup> See also Menéndez Pidal, *La España del Cid*, English translation by Harold Sunderland, London 1934, p. 178, about the palace in Saragossa called *al Jaferia*: It was he (a local ruler), 1046-1081, who gave his first name of *Abu Jafar* to the handsome *al Jaferia* palace on the outskirts of the city.

<sup>14</sup> Balaguet, Balasguet, vers 63, 200, 894; "Balaguer en Catalogne sur la Sègre,

and that which Tailfer and Tuoldus "allaient chantant" . . . Nobody will be astonished to find in the *Chanson* pêle-mêle, as we say, in a kind of geographical and historical topsy-turvy, echoes of Catalonian, south-Italian, Albanian, and even Asiatic battlefields: Balaguer and Berbegal (Brigal) near Barbastro, Palermo and Butentrot, Cappadoce and Lycanor.

Let us remember that the same men very often had fought in Spain, in Southern Italy, in Sicily, in Albania, and had finally tried to found a principality before the Crusade proper in Capadocia, Lycaonia, or Pontus, like Robert Crispin and Oursel de Bailleul.<sup>15</sup> It is in the wake of splendid adventurers like these that we must look either for the trouvère himself, or rather for those whose vivid tales inspired the new *laisse* of the final *Chanson de Roland*, the édition définitive of that masterpiece, so precisely dated and so important for history.

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aujourd'hui encore prononcé Balaguet." As Bédier says, III, 371, and Jenkins repeats, p. 31, its fame in France dates from the 5 years' siege it underwent during the French expedition of 1085.

<sup>15</sup> On the Normans in Asia Minor, see G. Schlumberger, "Deux chefs normands des armées byzantines au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Revue Historique*, VI (1881), 289-303.